
RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Managing Current Files

**PROTECTING
VITAL
OPERATING
RECORDS**

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOKS are developed by the National Archives and Records Service as technical guides to reducing and simplifying Government paperwork.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOKS:

Managing correspondence: *Plain Letters*1955...47 p
Managing correspondence: *Form Letters*1954...33 p
Managing correspondence: *Guide Letters*1955...23 p
Managing mail: *Agency Mail Operations*1957...47 p
Managing current files: *Protecting Vital Operating
Records*1958...19 p
Managing noncurrent files: *Applying Records Schedules* .1956...23 p
Managing noncurrent files: *Federal Records Centers*1954...25 p

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INTRODUCTION

In order to put the Government program for the protection of vital records in its proper perspective, it must be remembered that its entire purpose is to permit the continuity of government and other activities necessary in time of emergency. Since archival and other cultural materials normally are not involved in achieving this single purpose, they are excluded from the program. Planning for their preservation constitutes a distinct and separate program from the one considered in this handbook.

The continuity of government program was initiated on the Federal level at the direction of the President in Executive Order 10346, April 17, 1952 (See Figure 1). This Order made the Office of Defense Mobilization responsible for coordinating and developing the program, but each agency was made responsible for placing itself as soon as possible in such a position that it could carry out its essential functions in an emergency. Since this was a program primarily aimed at emergency functioning, the Office of Defense Mobilization concentrated its attention at first on the headquarters offices of agencies responsible for the majority of functions which would be essential at such a time. Gradually the program has been extended to other agencies and to many field offices.

In general the continuity of government program includes:

1. Development of a program for maintaining executive direction of the Government.
2. Identification of the essential emergency functions of each agency.
3. Designation of the employees who are to carry out these functions in an emergency.
4. Indoctrination and training of these employees as to what they are expected to do.
5. Development of an emergency relocation plan, including provision for getting the designated employees to the relocation site.
6. Development and activation of necessary regional coordination mechanisms.
7. Development and maintenance of a program for the protection of vital records so that such records will be available at the time and place when they may be needed.

This handbook suggests some of the factors and methods that should be considered in developing and operating a vital records protection program.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

PREPARATION BY FEDERAL AGENCIES OF CIVIL-DEFENSE EMERGENCY PLANS

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Federal
Civil Defense Act of 1950, approved January 12, 1951
(Public Law 920, 81st Congress), and as President of the
United States and Commander in Chief of the armed forces

Section 2. In addition to the plans required by
section 1 hereof, each Federal department and agency shall
prepare plans for maintaining the continuity of its essential
functions at the seat of Government and elsewhere during
the existence of a civil-defense emergency. The personnel,

as are not required for maintaining the continuity of the essential
functions of the departments and agencies; and coordinate such
arrangements with national, State, and local civil-defense plans.



THE WHITE HOUSE,

April 17, 1952.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
AND RECORDS SERVICE
FILED AND MADE AVAILABLE
FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION

APR 18 5 14 PM '52

IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER
DIVISION

Figure 1.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

At the outset it must be recognized that any practicable plan for the protection of vital records will fall far short of a perfect plan. The cost and complexity of work that would ensure the availability of every document that might be needed would be prohibitive.

On the other hand, there is no need to abandon all effort to provide for the most vital papers. A middle ground is possible.

It is particularly important that the program be kept on a practical basis because

This is an essential part of the larger program designed to ensure the continuity of government under the most adverse circumstances. That larger program cannot be successful if necessary papers are not at hand when they are most needed, and

There is every reason to expect that this program must be kept current for an indefinite period of time. If it is overly elaborate or cumbersome, inevitably it will not be kept up.

The procedures for ensuring that vital records will be available must be made routine.

The Federal program has been based on certain ground rules that have been generally accepted as valid. These basic assumptions, which are applicable to State and local governments as well as to the Federal agencies, are seven in number:

1. That in the event of war the city of Washington will be a prime target for atom, hydrogen, or other bombing.
2. That other large metropolitan and industrial centers will be equally prime targets for atom, hydrogen, or other bombing.
3. That the entire concept of "protection" must be based on relative rather than on absolute safety, since probably no vault that is near or above the surface of the ground could withstand a direct hit by the most destructive bombs. Adequate underground storage facilities are not available in many areas.
4. That the need for duplication of records will vary according to the value of the record, the normal distribution of copies, and the relative safety of the places to which the copies are distributed.
5. That evacuation to a non-target area is the most practical means of providing protection, with the realization at the same time that the hitherto non-target area may become a target area as soon as the valuable material is moved into it.
6. That a calculated risk must be taken with regard to certain records of lesser value than those identified as vital records.
7. That each agency affected is responsible for planning and putting into effect action necessary to protect its records.

WHAT RECORDS ARE VITAL?

Standards for identifying the vital records of an agency cannot be established except in very general terms, but such records fall into one of two categories:

1. Records vital to the essential functions of the Federal Government for the duration of an emergency if this country is attacked. Such records include those necessary to

the military effort of the nation - the operations of the Armed Forces;

the mobilization and protection of the material and manpower resources of the nation;

the maintenance of public health, safety, and order; the conduct of essential civil defense activities.

2. Records essential to the preservation of legal rights of individual citizens.

The key to identifying the records in the first category is obvious. Only records necessary to the conduct of emergency functions are involved.

Much of what most employees do from day to day would not be done in an emergency. Everyone tends quite often to forget this, and it is necessary constantly to remind ourselves.

In considering the program for protecting vital Post Office records in a large city, a postal official at first assumed that it was essential to safeguard a record of all the addresses that the carriers served, listed by carrier routes. After further thought, he reasoned that there would be very few addresses left after a bomb hit, and that therefore the record would be useless and certainly not essential.

Normally in identifying the vital records of an agency or of an office either one of two approaches can be used:

1. A complete inventory is compiled, showing all records touching on emergency functions, and then a selection is made from them of the records to be safeguarded, or

2. There is a careful study of how the function would be carried out under emergency conditions, and then on the basis of this study a listing is made of what records would be required.

In either case the only way to determine the completeness of the selection is through test under emergency conditions.

The first of these alternatives might at a glance seem the surer, but that is not always true.

The National Archives and Records Service found after the first test alert that some records vital to its operations would never have been brought to light by an inventory. These were records not being maintained because they were not needed under normal conditions. One example was detailed maps of cities showing the location of Federal Records Centers, to be used in calculating distances from bomb hits to the Centers in order to estimate damage. Normally only the street addresses of Centers are in the files, since there is little need to know the exact distances of Centers from other spots around the cities.

Also, using the inventory method alone, there is a temptation to earmark entire series of records for duplicating although actually only a few papers in the file are essential.

The difficulty in the second method is, of course, obvious. It is difficult enough to imagine the conditions under which emergency functions will be carried out--we are too used to telephones, files, easy transportation and consultation. It is even more difficult to imagine what records will be vital in carrying out the job to be done under those conditions.

It cannot be overemphasized that in identifying vital records the records must be evaluated only in regard to their essentiality in carrying out emergency functions or protecting legal rights. The person making the selection is not concerned with the archival or research value of the files. Many records currently being safeguarded have no lasting value, but their value at the onset of an emergency can hardly be questioned.

Lists or payrolls of persons receiving pensions are not of much enduring value after the statutory period for claims has run. Nevertheless, these records would be vital in maintaining or reestablishing the flow of cash through the economic system of the country in the event of a disaster.

On the other hand, experience in Operations Alert has indicated that in many cases personnel are so familiar with existing problem areas and carry so much program knowledge in their heads that they have not given sufficient attention to records which should be at the relocation site. They overlook the twin facts that in time of emergency they themselves may not reach the relocation site and that people not so well acquainted with their activities may have to take over. If the records are not adequate for use by others, they are not adequate.

In identifying vital records, as might be expected there are a few types that almost every agency or office evaluates in about the same way:

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Vital records include statements of mission in an emergency, plans and programs for carrying out this mission, statements of delegations of authority and of succession to command, any pre-drafted regulations or announcements to be issued immediately upon the onset of an emergency, action programs that may have been drafted in skeleton form, information as to the whereabouts of vital records, information about agency personnel, property, and activities sufficient to provide a basis for damage assessments, and similar information. Many agencies in addition

have provided for security copies of basic legislation, regulations, and procedures, even though many of these would be rendered at least temporarily inoperative in an emergency.

PERSONNEL

Among the personnel records most frequently designated as vital are rosters of employees (often in the form of a telephone directory or a copy of the payroll) and rosters of employees' skills that might be useful during and after a disaster. Of prime importance, of course, in time of disaster would be information as to which employees were available for duty and which were casualties, but such information must be obtained through a prearranged reporting system rather than through storage of security copies of records.

LEGAL RIGHTS

In general a distinction has been drawn by Federal agencies between records that support legal rights which might be reestablished through affidavit and which are well known to those involved, and records of legal rights maintained by the Federal Government as the statutory office of record, particularly if it is unrealistic to expect those involved to know the details of the records.

Real estate titles, for example, have in the past been reestablished after loss of records, and usually agencies know what real estate the Government owns. Furthermore, there are inventories of Federal land holdings, with copies dispersed in various locations. Finally, the Federal Government is not the office of record for real estate titles; they are registered in local court houses, many of which would almost certainly escape relatively unharmed in an emergency. For these reasons Federal agencies have not tried to safeguard title papers to Federally-owned land. Affidavits and other records that might survive a disaster should be sufficient to reestablish title.

The Federal Government has felt that where it is the office of record for legal rights--citizenship, for example--it has a primary responsibility for their protection. Few people know the amount of their equity in retirement funds, so the necessary records to protect this equity have been safeguarded by the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, the Railroad Retirement Board, and other agencies. Most Federal agencies have also taken steps to protect the rights of their employees to earned leave and to pay due them through safeguarding copies of periodic payrolls and key leave records.

FISCAL

There has been no effort to provide security copies of all the fiscal records of the Government simply because the result would be too unwieldy and expensive.

Most agencies have safeguarded copies of periodic summaries of their financial status, records of significant amounts of money due to the Government, and records of certain debts owed by the Government. For the most part, however, no effort has been made to safeguard copies of all fiscal records relating to procurement; it is up to the seller to preserve what he might need to prove his claim.

On the other hand, the Government tries to safeguard a record of loans it has made in order to collect, if collection would be possible after a disaster. In its handling of fiscal records the same factors and motivation prevail in the Federal Government as in State and local governments and in private industry. Owing to differences in the respective missions of Government and private industry, however, different records are chosen.

INDUSTRIAL

The Federal Government operates many kinds of industrial establishments, and in such establishments the key records are the same as are to be found in private industry.

Engineering drawings, explanations of complex industrial processes, lists of suppliers of items and materials not everywhere available, and similar records are carefully safeguarded.

ASSIGNED MISSION

In determining what are indispensable records of activities peculiar to individual agencies, each agency must of course make its own decision in the light of the emergency mission for which it is responsible. The records designated will be greatly influenced, however, by whether the emergency mission is simply a continuation of a normal peacetime program or is instead a completely or nearly completely new program, such as price control, which is not a normal function of any existing agency.

If the emergency mission represents continuation of a normal program, the agency will need security copies of those records that show the current status of the program.

Records showing the location of stocks of medical and other supplies may be of the utmost importance; records of building construction and of public utility systems may be essential for repair and rescue work as well as for determining the relative safety of structures still standing.

Basically the agency will want to provide security copies of the summary information needed to continue and expand a going program.

On the other hand, if the emergency mission of an agency, or a part of it, consists of the administration of a program not a part of normal Government functions, the agency will want to safeguard background material as to how the work was done in previous emergencies or how it should be done.

Forms used to accomplish the mission, reports required, regulations, procedures, and, particularly, critical evaluations of the success of comparable predecessor programs will be vital.

Such materials may often be available in printed or published form rather than as manuscripts. Regardless of form, they will be all-important in getting the program off to a fast and effective start.

Particularly in the case of background materials that may be needed, but also in other cases, an agency should check to see what may be available at its relocation site before completing its selection of vital records and duplicating them.

Libraries are near most such sites. Often these libraries have many books and other holdings containing some of the very information that the agency will need. In such cases the agency need not provide a duplicate of the same material.

There are additional problems in correlating the selection of vital records by central offices and field offices of agencies.

As a rule, there is no need to safeguard the same information both places. If a pension roll is being safeguarded centrally, field offices need not protect the same information at each field location. On the other hand, a certain amount of duplicate information is required at central offices and field offices. If the two offices are using different maps to make decisions regarding the same geographical area, for example, they may not be able to communicate effectively with each other. Just when complete understanding is most important it may be most lacking.

All types of information that are basic to "talking the same language" should be available to all concerned, not just to the person at one end of the conversation.

METHODS FOR PROVIDING SECURITY COPIES

The methods employed to protect vital records vary from agency to agency and from office to office, but essentially they involve combinations of four expedients:

1. RELIANCE ON EXISTING DUPLICATES AT OTHER LOCATIONS

Many offices have relied entirely, and almost all others depend to some extent, on duplicate sets of documents already on file in other offices of their own agency or organization, in other field agencies, or in non-governmental institutions to which they would have access in time of disaster. These documents are regularly added to as a part of everyday business. This has been termed "built in dispersal." In some cases the whereabouts of these duplicates is well known; usually field offices have copies of all of an agency's directives, regulations, organization charts, and the like. In other cases only a handful of employees are even vaguely aware of the existence of the program for the protection of vital records, and therefore only that handful have even thought in terms of the existence and preservation of duplicates in field office files.

2. PROVISION OF PAPER DUPLICATES FOR STORAGE AT ANOTHER LOCATION

In some cases duplicates are assembled specifically for the purpose and are stored in field offices of the agency or at other locations. This has been called "improvised dispersal." The volume of these records normally is not such as to create a space problem.

3. SECURITY COPYING

Many agencies have undertaken programs for making copies of existing records, either because there are existing accumulations of vital records of which no extra copies are available or because the nature of the record makes it impracticable to create it in multiple copies. Examples of the first type of records are construction drawings for public utilities constructed in the past; examples of the second are records of certain loans.

Copies are made by various methods, depending on the quantity of records to be copied and on the nature of the record. At times copies have been typed and at times photocopy reproductions have been made, but microfilm has been the most used method for reproducing existing files. Some Federal agencies have used their own cameras or have arranged for other agencies to do the work, whereas others have contracted with commercial companies that are equipped to do the job.

When the vital records program was first initiated it was necessary to microfilm significant quantities of existing records in order to provide the copies for security storage. As time has passed, provision has been made for

providing extra copies at the time records are created, and microfilm has been used less. There are at least three reasons for this decline:

Microfilming is more costly normally than providing an extra copy at the time the record is created;

Microfilm is relatively hard to use, and in an emergency there might be real difficulty in providing necessary readers, to say nothing of providing paper prints;

As long as the images are on a single reel of microfilm, only one person can use the reel at a time.

In certain circumstances, however, microfilming has merit in providing security copies. It can be done relatively quickly, it presents a minimum storage problem at the relocation site, and it is less costly than other reproduction processes where reproduction of existing documents is necessary.

4. EVACUATION OF OFFICIAL FILES TO RELATIVELY SAFE LOCATIONS

This is feasible when the vital records are referred to very seldom, or when, after their immediate administrative purpose has been served, they will not be needed for a predictable or relatively long period of time.

The particular method used in ensuring the availability of records depends on what records are to be available, to what extent their dispersal has been accomplished through normal procedures, and the relative costs of providing protection through the several available methods.

MECHANICS OF PROTECTING VITAL RECORDS

After vital records have been identified and decisions made as to the best method of ensuring their safety, the next question that arises is, where should they be stored.

In its definition of vital records, the Office of Defense Mobilization makes a distinction:

Records that are "vital to the essential functions of the Federal Government for the duration of an emergency if this country is attacked" should be available at the agency relocation site.

Records that are essential to the preservation of legal rights of individual citizens and records that may be needed for reconstruction purposes and other similar purposes that can be served after the end of the immediate emergency require protection but need not be at the relocation site. The site chosen for such records should be relatively safe, but often these records are voluminous and it is impracticable to keep them at the relocation site.

In saying that certain records should be stored at the relocation site, of course the Office of Defense Mobilization does not mean necessarily in the same buildings. It does mean that records that will be needed in West Virginia should not be stored in North Dakota. Transportation and communication facilities will be at a premium during an emergency, and they should not be wasted in transporting or transmitting records that could have been stored at a more accessible location.

Many commercial companies have either built special repositories in sparsely populated areas or have rented space in one of the several commercially-operated vaults in abandoned mines or tunnels. For the most part the Federal agencies have not gone into commercial space. Some agencies store the small core of their vital records at conveniently located field offices. Other agencies follow the still better practice of keeping the records right where they might be used at the agency relocation site. The hazard of radiological fallout may even require placing certain records (those required in the first few days) in an operating area which has adequate shielding.

Since Federal Records Centers are seldom near relocation sites and may be located in potential target areas themselves, agencies normally do not store records in them that are in any way vital. In exceptional cases, by agreement with the National Archives and Records Service central office or the regional office involved, agencies with no facilities outside of Washington (or the other city in which their headquarters are located) may send indispensable records to Federal Records Centers.

When transferring such records to a Federal Records Center, however, the agency is responsible for informing the Center at the time of transfer that it considers the records vital in an emergency. If this notification is given, the Center will do its best to provide special protective handling of the records, but unless so notified the Center will provide no special handling.

Another element in the choice of location must be the storage facilities that are available or can be made available. Certain stored documents are likely to be security classified, so at least some of the space or equipment that is used should be approved by the agency security officer for storage of documents of the specified degree or classification.

With these reservations in mind, the choice of space and equipment is largely dependent on only common sense. As a minimum the space should be walled off, but unless there are security considerations, a normal locked door should suffice. Normal standards of humidity, protection against insects, and the like should be observed.

Depending on availability and convenience, non-classified records may be kept on open shelves, in file cabinets, or even in transfer cases. Obviously the amount of such equipment that is needed will depend on the volume of records to be stored.

Continued maintenance of the vital records is more dependent on the care taken in labelling and shipping the files than on the space and equipment.

There are many factors to be considered in this apparently simple operation, some of which are not so simple in fact:

1. POINT OF COLLECTION

There must be a clear-cut determination as to the organizational levels at which vital records will be collected, packaged, and organized at the storage point. In large Federal agencies this may be at the bureau level, with sub-points within the bureau; in other cases it may be at the branch or section level. In any event, there must be a specific person responsible for seeing that the records of a given unit or group of units are collected and forwarded, and the records almost inevitably must be organized at the storage site in accordance with the units forwarding them. Only in this way can all the vital records be made available promptly to the unit responsible for a given function in an emergency. If all the records of the agency are intermixed, there will be a major segregation job before any emergency activities can begin.

2. PACKAGING

Records should be placed in appropriate folders, envelopes, or bundles small enough to handle easily. In the case of security-classified materials, the envelopes or bundles must be of such size that they will fit the standard legal or letter size safe-type equipment. In addition, records of only one organizational unit should be in the same envelope or folder, and the records in a given folder should be disposable at the same time. Many agencies provide that employees stationed regularly at the relocation site are not permitted to open an envelope, folder or bundle, so that records which will be replaced quarterly, semi-annually, or at some other period should not be in the same bundle with records not replaceable at the same intervals.

Form HEV-308 (2/57)		DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE	
INVENTORY OF INDISPENSABLE OPERATING RECORDS			
1. NAME OF ORGANIZATION		2. INVENTORY CONTROL NUMBER	
3. OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RECORDS	BUILDING	ROOM NO.	TELEPHONE NO.
4. DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS			
5. INCLUSIVE DATES OF RECORDS DESCRIBED ABOVE		6. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	
FROM TO			
7. METHOD OF DUPLICATING			
<input type="checkbox"/> EXTRA COPY <input type="checkbox"/> MICROFILM <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (EXPLAIN UNDER REMARKS)			
8. TRANSFER TO			
<input type="checkbox"/> SPARK <input type="checkbox"/> CABLE <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER DESIGNATED LOCATION			
9. DATE OF TRANSFER	10. TYPE OF ACCESSION		
	<input type="checkbox"/> INITIAL <input type="checkbox"/> INTERFILE <input type="checkbox"/> REPLACEMENT		
11. REMARKS			
(SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR RECORDS)		(SIGNATURE OF INDISPENSABLE OPERATING RECORDS OFFICER)	
(TITLE)		(ORGANIZATIONAL LOCATION)	
(DATE)		(DATE)	

Figure 3.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION				DATE	
INVENTORY OF INDISPENSABLE RECORDS				SYMBOL	
OFFICE		DIVISION		BRANCH	
				SECTION	
BUILDING		ROOM NUMBER		TELEPHONE NUMBER	
				OFFICIAL CONTACTED	
TITLE OF FILE				DATE OF RECORDS	
				FROM	
				TO	
DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS					
FILING ARRANGEMENT					VOLUME
METHOD OF DUPLICATING			<input type="checkbox"/> PREPARE EXTRA COPY OF NEXT SIMILAR DOCUMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> MICROFILM	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (<i>Explain under Remarks</i>)
CONTINUING FILE		RATE OF ACCUMULATION		RATE OF CHANGES IN FILES TO BE MICROFILMED	
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO					
FUTURE ACCUMULATIONS TO BE INTERFILED		FREQUENCY OF REPLACEMENT AT CENTER		SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO					
RETENTION PERIOD		DISPOSITION OF MATERIAL		DATE TRANSFERRED TO RELOCATION CENTER	
REMARKS					
APPROVED BY (<i>Signature</i>)			TITLE		DATE

Figure 4.

6. TRANSFER TO STORAGE

Normally records are not transferred on a daily basis (unless the material is of the utmost importance) but on a weekly or monthly basis, particularly if the sending of a special messenger is involved. In some cases agencies may arrange with the local postmaster at the relocation site to receive and hold unclassified materials for temporary storage in a post office vault, safe, or locked file. Periodically the material is then picked up and moved to the storage site. If the agency security officer approves, this same system can be used for classified materials, but before such approval is given, an inspection of the postal facilities is usually required.

7. STORAGE

At the relocation site the records are usually arranged on an organizational basis (by collecting points, as noted above) and thereunder chronologically by date of receipt or numerically by inventory number.

8. ROTATION OF RECORDS

Records are retained at the site in accordance with instructions on the package labels or on the inventory sheets. If new shipments are to replace old, this fact must be clearly indicated, and the envelopes, folders, or bundles to be destroyed will be destroyed on the spot or, more often, will be returned to the collecting point for destruction there. Similarly, when supplementary materials are received at the relocation site, their relationship to materials already there should be clearly set forth on the package label or the inventory.

9. RESPONSIBLE CUSTODY

Some one individual must be responsible for maintaining the records in storage. It may be impossible or unnecessary to station some one at the storage point at all times, but some individual must be responsible for making periodic trips to file additional materials in their proper places, to remove disposable files, and to ensure the continued proper maintenance of the vital security copies.

If all these factors have been taken into account, when either a test alert or a real emergency occurs, the vital records should be waiting for personnel to use them, in such shape that they can be immediately made available with no obsolete materials to wade through before reaching the current files.

ENSURING ADEQUACY OF THE PROGRAM

What appears on paper to be the best possible program for the protection of vital records will represent a complete waste of time and effort if it is not kept up to date.

To ensure that the program is adequate it must be simple and economical, and it must be tested periodically in one way or another.

As has already been indicated, in determining what are vital records there are two conflicting tendencies to be reconciled:

1. The tendency of most people to over-emphasize the value of the tasks they are performing and consequently to earmark too many records as vital records, and
2. The tendency of people to forget that when someone else must perform their vital functions, that other person will not have the benefit of all the information in their own minds.

The records must be complete enough to enable a person relatively strange to the job to carry it out, and they must be few enough to make a continuing program practical.

Federal agencies have found that, as in the case of private companies, the percentage of all their records that deserve designation as vital records will vary with the functions they are to perform, but that in any event the percentage will be relatively small. The National Records Management Council believes that in an average business company not more than 1% or 2% of the total holdings are vital records, although it recognizes that in certain circumstances this figure may be too small. (Robert A. Shiff, "Protect Your Records Against Disaster," Harvard Business Review, July-August 1956).

One Government agency with extensive mobilization responsibilities, which presumably in a time of emergency would expand very rapidly and perhaps would be divided into several independent agencies, presently has in storage a volume of records equal to 2% of its total holdings. Another agency, which would continue in an emergency to carry on most of its present functions, has provided for safeguarding 1% of its current holdings. These agencies have taken care to avoid developing overly elaborate programs to safeguard everything, and they should be able to continue their programs indefinitely without running into budget or procedural difficulties.

In order to be sure that the vital records program is kept current, the Office of Defense Mobilization has instituted a reporting system for Federal agencies that is intended to serve several purposes, among them, to act as a constant reminder to agencies that they should review the progress of their programs.

Such a system must provide full information on the status of the program, the persons responsible for specific activities, and the nature and whereabouts of the key records. The information, which should be kept where it is available as well

as safe, will be needed not only at the agency relocation site but also where it can be used by the relocation officers and others responsible for planning, directing, and reviewing emergency activities.

Among the data needed are the specific locations of the vital records. In an emergency it would not be sufficient to know only the name of the city where the records are held. If only this were known by the official needing the records the emergency might well be over before the records were found.

Similarly, if records are kept at several locations, the person needing them wants to know which files are at which location so that he can get what he wants with a minimum of wasted time.

In addition, names and addresses should be kept of several people who know about the program, preferably people at different locations. This is done on the theory that the same disaster that made necessary recourse to the records might also eliminate officials at any single location who knew anything about the program.

Unless this information is revised regularly and kept current it may be of no value in time of emergency.

The best test of the adequacy of the program is, of course, furnished by the Operations Alert that have been conducted by the Federal Civil Defense Administration. During these Alerts it has been possible to a limited degree to determine whether available records are sufficient. The tests are not conclusive, since usually the personnel using the records are the same as those who usually conduct the same functions under normal conditions, but nonetheless they are the best tests available.

CHECK LIST

The questions are so worded that check marks in the NO column indicate the need for corrective action.

	YES	NO
1. Do you know the emergency mission of your office?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are all records vital to your emergency mission stored at your re-location site or accessible to it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are only records vital to emergency missions at the relocation site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are records at the relocation site kept current?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are they adequately arranged and listed or indexed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are obsolete materials systematically removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are statements of emergency mission, delegations of authority, and pre-drafted emergency issuances available at relocation site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are adequate records of personnel there?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are voluminous records vital to eventual safeguarding of legal rights dispersed elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Are records necessary to facilitate establishment of new programs at relocation site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Has the need for such records been checked against local library holdings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Has the availability of microfilm readers, etc., in the area been checked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Have field office plans been coordinated with central office plans?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Is there provision, through reports or otherwise, for periodically checking on the adequacy of your vital records program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Were the records at the relocation site adequate during the past alert?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Is your program so simple and inexpensive that you anticipate no difficulties in keeping it up to date?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Are adequate security measures in effect for the program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Is your office's program in full operation and now capable of meeting emergency requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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